

**R**oger; liftoff and the clock is started.... Yes, sir, reading you loud and clear. This is *Freedom 7*."

These words, which I was privileged to speak a few seconds after liftoff in *Freedom 7* on May 5, 1961, marked America's first step in its manned space flight program. At the successful completion of the mission, this country had accumulated one-quarter of a man-hour in space.

Eight years and two months later, after we had achieved thousands of man-hours in space, Neil Armstrong completed "one giant leap for mankind" as he stepped from the spacecraft *Eagle* onto the moon.

The intervening years have been marked by hard work, intense research and precise planning by hundreds of thousands of Americans in government and industry. The utilization of space truly has been a national effort; the talents of the military services have been invaluable through these years. The United States Navy has played a particularly important part in the development and final realization of that enterprise.

There is yet a long way to go. Eventually Americans will visit other planets in our solar system. More immediately we will man space stations, pilot space shuttles to visit these stations on a regular schedule, and investigate the distant planets and the solar system with unmanned spacecraft.

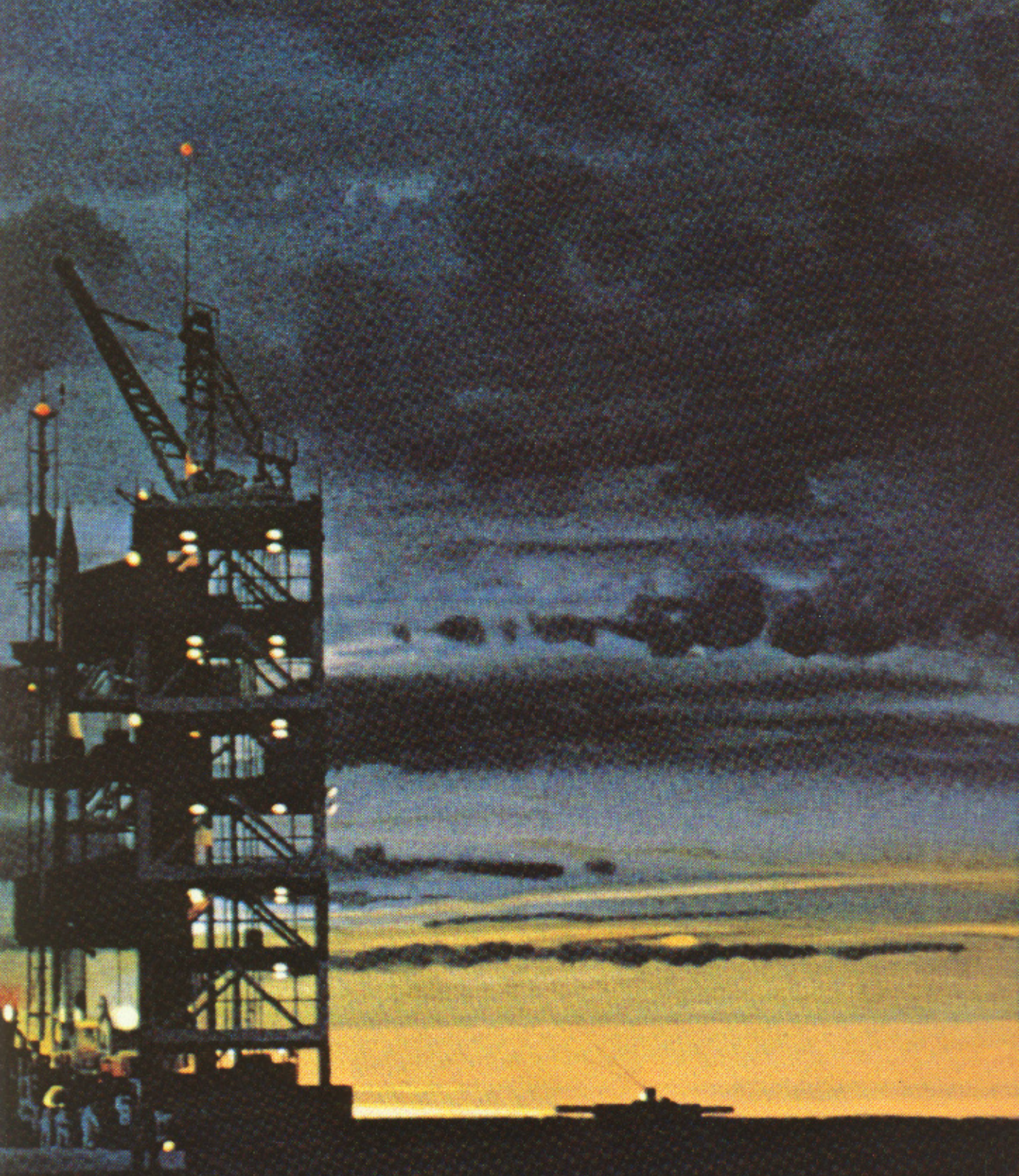
The United States has established its lead as a spacefaring nation. I, for one, as a Naval Aviator, am honored to have been in at the beginning and feel fortunate to have a continuing role in this great effort.

I am continually proud of the fine support the Navy has provided over the years of the space program.

*Alan B. Shepard, Jr.*

Captain Alan B. Shepard, Jr., USN  
NASA Astronaut





PAINTING OF VANGUARD LAUNCH SITE,  
CAPE CANAVERAL, 1958, COURTESY  
U.S. NAVY COMBAT ART COLLECTION

*Ted Wilbur*